

California State University, San Bernardino

**CSUSB ScholarWorks**

---

Theses Digitization Project

John M. Pfau Library

---

2004

## Stephen Gosson's rhetorical strategies in The School of Abuse

Timothy Paul Johnson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project>



Part of the [Rhetoric Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Johnson, Timothy Paul, "Stephen Gosson's rhetorical strategies in The School of Abuse" (2004). *Theses Digitization Project*. 2604.

<https://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/etd-project/2604>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the John M. Pfau Library at CSUSB ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses Digitization Project by an authorized administrator of CSUSB ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@csusb.edu](mailto:scholarworks@csusb.edu).

STEPHEN GOSSON'S RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN  
*THE SCHOOL OF ABUSE*

---

A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

---

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English Composition:  
Literature

---

by  
Timothy Paul Johnson  
September 2004

STEPHEN GOSSON'S RHETORICAL STRATEGIES IN

*THE SCHOOL OF ABUSE*

---

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

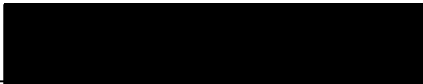
---

by

Timothy Paul Johnson

September 2004

Approved by:

  
Jennifer Andersen, Chair, English

8/31/04  
Date

  
Bruce Golden

  
Renée Pigeon

## ABSTRACT

This thesis shows how Stephen Gosson's *The School of Abuse* (1579) functions as a rhetorical composition. The elements of writer, readership, and text are each examined in order to elucidate the rhetorical decisions made by Gosson during the composition of *The School*. Gosson's decisions to adhere to or deviate from the rhetorical prescriptions of classical texts affect the overall persuasiveness of his argument. In much of Gosson's text, he studiously follows the recommendations of classical rhetorical theorists such as Plato and Aristotle, but in the aspect of style, Gosson decides to ignore classical recommendations and imitate the fashionable stylistic techniques of his contemporaries.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am beholden to all friends, family, and faculty who helped me through the long process of writing this thesis. Thank you for your patience and generosity. I owe a special thank you to Dr. Andersen, Dr. Golden, and Dr. Pigeon for the profound insight and gentle guidance that they have lent to my composition efforts.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	. . . . .	.iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	. . . . .	.iv
CHAPTER ONE: <i>THE SCHOOL OF ABUSE</i> IN THE CONTEXT OF LATE SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PRINT CULTURE		
Introduction	. . . . .	.1
The Writer of <i>The School</i>	. . . . .	.6
Gosson's Relationship to Other Pamphleteers	. . . . .	.12
The Readership of <i>The School</i>	. . . . .	.22
CHAPTER TWO: THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF <i>THE SCHOOL</i>		
Rhetoric Versus Dialectic	. . . . .	.32
<i>The School Of Abuse</i> as Deliberative Rhetoric	. . . . .	.34
An Appeal to the Worthy and Advantageous	. . . . .	.38
The Three Modes of Persuasion in <i>The School</i>	. . . . .	.47
CHAPTER THREE: THE STYLE OF <i>THE SCHOOL</i>		
Renaissance Prose Styles	. . . . .	.61
The Style of <i>The School</i>	. . . . .	.65
Deviations from Aristotle	. . . . .	.73
Conclusion	. . . . .	.78
REFERENCES	. . . . .	.80

CHAPTER ONE

*THE SCHOOL OF ABUSE* IN THE CONTEXT OF LATE  
SIXTEENTH-CENTURY PRINT CULTURE

Introduction

Attempts to evaluate the importance of nature and nurture in the development of personal traits have been undertaken for thousands of years. Each generation has tried to solve this puzzle according to its own cultural ideology or scientific capabilities. As far as the ancient study of rhetoric is concerned, nature and nurture have received considerable attention. "Ability," writes Isocrates, "whether in speech or in any other activity is found by those who are well endowed by nature . . . formal training makes men more skillful" (74). The idea that either nature or nurture, or a combination of both is able to best equip a person with rhetorical skills is a frequently visited theme in classical rhetorical treatises. Stephen Gosson, the Renaissance playwright and pamphleteer, might have had a natural grasp of argumentation and style, but it is certain that his education focused acutely on these two aspects of rhetoric.

The lectures that Gosson heard as a student in John Rainolds's classroom at Corpus Christi College were "ostensibly based on Aristotle's *Rhetoric*," and William Ringler notes that "Gosson himself apparently took careful notes while he listened to them" (11). Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* could easily be considered the most noteworthy text of rhetorical theory ever written. In fact, Edward P.J. Corbett has called *On Rhetoric*, "certainly one of the great books of the Western world," (494) and has described Aristotle as "the fountainhead of all later rhetorical theory" (493). Arthur F. Kinney has also shown Gosson's familiarity with Plato, a prominent rhetorical theorist, claiming that "Gosson's initial position on Poetry is taken from Plato" (18). Between *The Ephemerides of Phialo* (1579) and *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* (1582), two of Gosson's published works, Gosson disappeared from London for some time. Kinney believes that he spent "fourteen months reading Plato" (18). Gosson would have benefited by his exposure to the two classical Greek thinkers, and he would have developed a basic awareness of rhetorical theory that would have greatly contributed to his writings.

Plato and Aristotle often express different opinions on rhetoric, but George A. Kennedy believes that Aristotle's



views were "an orderly development of the direction in which Socratic and Platonic thought had been moving for nearly a hundred years in contrast to the mainstream of classical rhetoric" (64). These two philosophers are often regarded as having significantly contributed to the foundation of classical rhetoric, and upon this bedrock rhetorical theorists have built their ideologies. Classical rhetoric offers a conceptual framework that affords valuable insight into "purpose, audience, composition, argumentation, organization and style" (Bizzel 7). Although the classical approach to rhetoric contains some variance of opinion, it is overwhelmingly like-minded, and it is usually treated as a coherent, cohesive approach to the study of discourse. For instance, most classical rhetoricians agree that there are three modes of appeal: ethos, pathos, and logos. They also stress the importance of common topics when making a logical argument and are in reasonable consensus about what those common topics are.

Although in the English Renaissance, at least in the case of rhetoric, Cicero was probably the most popular voice from the classical world, George A. Kennedy asserts that "there is very little in Ciceronian rhetoric that is original with Cicero" (3). In an Appendix to Aristotle's *On*

*Rhetoric*, Kennedy shows how much of Cicero's rhetorical stance was derived from Aristotle:

When Cicero wrote *On the Orator* in 55 B.C., he clearly had some knowledge of the *Rhetoric* . . . Aristotelian influences include the role of logical proof, presentation of character, and emotional appeal (2.115) . . . This represents an important and long influential restatement and extension of Aristotle's basic concepts in *Rhetoric* 1.2. (307)

Since Gosson's own education had such a strong Aristotelian influence, and since the other, popular ideas about rhetoric in Gosson's time were in many ways influenced by Aristotelian thought, this thesis will frequently refer to Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*.

Gosson consciously employed rhetorical strategies when he wrote *The School of Abuse* (1579), the work for which he is most frequently remembered, and it is the goal of this thesis to show how Gosson used classical rhetorical strategies to advance his opinions in the London print culture of the late sixteenth century. My research has discovered only two books that are exclusively devoted to Stephen Gosson. Both of these books (*Markets of Bawdrie* by

Arthur F. Kinney and *Stephen Gosson: A Biographical and Critical Study* by William Ringler) are overviews of his entire career as a writer, and neither one offers extensive attention to *The School*. What they do say about *The School* has been invaluable to me in the composition of this thesis, especially a chapter in Ringler's book entitled "Style and Structure." Ringler and Kinney both show how *The School* fits into the Renaissance conception of what a rhetorical exposition should be, but their attention to Renaissance rhetoric often undervalues the classical framework that Gosson utilizes so effectively in *The School*.

According to Aristotle, every complete rhetorical analysis must concern itself with three things: "a speaker and a subject on which he speaks and someone addressed" (47). *The School of Abuse* is a written document, and not a speech, but Sandra Clark asserts that even though "...the term rhetoric may imply spoken rather than written discourse; to men of the Renaissance the two were not so sharply distinguished, and one noun covered both" (225). Aristotle's three elements might equally be called "a writer, the text itself, and a readership." An analysis of the writer and the readership of Stephen Gosson's *The School*

of *Abuse* will occupy this chapter, while Chapters Two and Three will discuss the text itself.

### The Writer of *The School*

Stephen Gosson is best remembered for his antitheatrical stance, but he was also a writer who cared about a good many more things than the theater. His most famous pamphlet, *The School of Abuse*, exhibits a very impressive argument against the English theater in his time, but this is not the only subject of his pamphlet. *The School* is exactly what it proclaims itself to be: a treatise that condemns the abuses of what could be otherwise useful things. Among the things that Gosson describes as being abused are poetry, music, drama, and fencing. A later pamphlet penned by Gosson, *Plays Confuted in Five Acts* (1582), is a fiercely antitheatrical text, and it is likely that this pamphlet has influenced most readings of *The School*. Two factors, however, make Gosson's pamphlet of particular interest to his biographers. First, he was formerly a playwright himself. Although none of his plays have survived, we know the names of three of them: *Captain Mario*, *Praise at Parting*, and *Catilins Conspiracies*; and Ringler, whose biography of Gosson is still universally

recognized as the best, has speculated upon the existence of others from references to his many works acted upon the stage (22). Second, unlike other antitheatrical tracts of the late sixteenth century which were written in rhetorical language that was "almost entirely 'puritan' in form" (Lake, *Public Sphere* 22), Gosson chose to write an overtly secular polemic that makes its argument in strictly "profane" terms. These interesting facts about *The School of Abuse* might have contributed to the appeal of the pamphlet, but whatever the cause, the number of printings that *The School* received, and the very public response that *The School* provoked bear witness to the fact that the pamphlet was unquestionably a popular publication.

Fortunately, Gosson scholars have quite a bit of evidence to work with (although never enough) when trying to construct some sort of a biography of the author. Much is known, for example, about where he was educated, with whom he associated himself, what his occupation was, whom he married, and much can be said about the other specifics of Gosson's life without resorting to hypotheses.

Stephen Gosson was born into what Ringler calls the "lower middle class" (6). His father was eager to advance his family's fortunes as far as they could be, and it is

possible that his effort to educate his oldest son Stephen was an attempt to do just that. Corpus Christi College, Oxford, was the locus of Gosson's education after grammar school, but it appears as if he never graduated due to financial hardship (Ringler 17). While he was a university student, however, he was lucky enough to have studied under one of the most respected academics of the English Renaissance, John Rainolds. Among Rainolds's impressive accomplishments were appointments as the dean of Lincoln, president of Corpus, foreman of the Hampton Court Conference, and chaplain to King James (Ringler 8). Rainolds was a favorite of Corpus Students, and Ringler has shown his tremendous influence upon young Stephen Gosson. Of special importance to this thesis is the fact that Rainolds was the Greek reader at Corpus, and that he taught extensively from Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* (Ringler 12). Elizabeth Porges-Watson feels that Sir Philip Sidney's careful perusing of *On Rhetoric* "contributed much to the development of his own style, his feeling for language and the possibilities of its controlled manipulation," and it would seem that Gosson's reading of Aristotle's text produced similar results for him. Gosson's education had a very strong Anglican bent, and the willingness with which he

apparently absorbed the lectures and curriculum has enabled recent scholars to rescue him from the classification of "Puritan" that has for so long been associated with his name. In fact, after Gosson had ceased pamphleteering, he began a career as an Anglican minister where he was promoted with unusual celerity, until he died as the rector of St. Botolph's in 1624 (Ringler 52).

Although a career as a divine was common for Corpus graduates, nothing was common about the path that led Gosson from student to minister. Since Gosson possessed an education rather than a trade, his career options were limited considerably. By whatever arrangement of circumstances, Gosson found himself writing plays that were regularly played in the newly built London playhouses. This decision, most likely inspired by poverty, was remarkably audacious considering Gosson's immediate past. Ringler notes that:

Nothing could have been more serious or more strict than the view of life or the kind of morality that was impressed upon him at Canterbury and Oxford. Corpus was no friend to the Muses . . . .With the exception of Gosson himself, not one member of his college who was in residence during

the years 1572-1576 was the author of a single published poem, play, or work of fiction. (15)

Gosson's financial situation must certainly have been dire if he was pursuing this career against his religious scruples. John Rainolds, upon whom so much of Gosson's education depended, was famously outspoken in his contempt of plays. Rainolds objected to "all theatrical productions, of whatever origin, under whatever auspices, and against all plays, in whatever languages, of whatever apparent harmlessness of subject matter" (Barish 83). In the 1590's, Rainolds would become one of the leading opponents of the stage (famously defeating playwright Dr. William Gager in a learned debate, and penning his own antitheatrical pamphlet, *Th' overthrow of Stage-Playes* (Chambers 252), but this was after Gosson had left Corpus. One of the reasons that Gosson is not remembered primarily as a playwright is simple: "Although an industrious, he was not a particularly successful writer for the stage" (Ringler 22). Gosson's decision to cease writing plays was, in regards to his literary significance, the most important decision of his life.

In Gosson's later writings, he would look back upon his time as a playwright as the manifestation of a rebellious



and foolish youth, and then establish the persona (common in Renaissance pamphlets) of a "penitent prodigal." "I have sinned, and am sorry for my fault," claims Gosson halfway through *The School* (97). R. W. Maslen expounds upon this commonplace of Renaissance literature in his introduction to Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*. He claims that "an astonishing number of other writers of poetry and imaginative fiction in the decade leading up to Sidney's *Apology* chose to present their careers as following . . . the pattern established by Christ's parable" (23). Consider, for example Anthony Munday's repentant plea in the preface to *The Second and Third Blast*,

I began to loath my former life and to mislike my  
own doings; and I was no sooner drawn with an  
heartly desire to return unto the Lord but I found  
myself strengthened with his grace unto good  
desires. (qtd. in Lake, *Lewd Hat* 433)

In recent years, much has been made of these penitent prodigals. Their claims have been regarded rather skeptically. More often than not, "penitent prodigals" are accused of insincere posturing, and the fact that Gosson was handsomely paid for his attack on the stage does not make a strong case for a sincere conversion. Ringler has called

Gosson's conversion "good journalism" (25), and Kinney describes it as a "mock confession" (50). The prodigal son in the gospel of Luke, however, was not brought to repentance by a change of heart, but by a change of circumstances. It was not a realization that his actions had been selfish and cruel that caused the prodigal son to repent, but rather that he had grown weary of hunger and poverty. Similarly, it could be said that it was not a recollection of Rainolds's passionate sermons against the theater, or a new reading of antitheatrical invectives by Augustine or Tertullian that prompted Gosson to repent, but the fact that he realized that writing plays brought him very little money, and he had better try something else. It would seem, then, entirely appropriate to accept Gosson's claims to be a prodigal returned, since his own life bears such a close resemblance to the actual prodigal son spoken of in Luke 15.

#### Gosson's Relationship to Other Pamphleteers

Gosson did stop composing plays, if not for spiritual reasons, then probably for economical ones, and began looking for other ways to put his education to use. He wrote a courtesy book entitled *The Ephemerides of Phialo*,

which was similar in tone and content to Castiglione's famous *The Courtier*, and very similar in style to John Lyly's *Euphues*. Even though Gosson wrote in three distinctly different genres, he was not an exceptionally versatile writer for his time. In fact, versatility was a stock trait of Renaissance writers. Shakespeare wrote plays, narrative poems, and sonnets; Sidney wrote a prose romance, a prose treatise, and a sonnet sequence; and fellow pamphleteers Munday, Lodge, Heywood, Dekker, and Greene (to name a few) all produced notable literary achievements other than their pamphlets. It was at this time, while he was working on the *The Ephemerides*, that he was commissioned to write *The School of Abuse*. Exactly who commissioned Gosson is not known, but it is generally agreed upon that Gosson did not write *The School* on his own initiative. Ringler claims that there "are at least six good reasons to believe that Gosson was hired to write *The School of Abuse*" (26). Historian Peter Lake concedes that Ringler's argument for sponsorship is valid and shares his assumptions:

What we have here, then, is a campaign against the theatre, conducted, probably at the behest of powerful elements in the city, both by puritan preachers and hack writers on the make . . .

anxious to attach both themselves and their chosen  
issue of the moment to powerful persons at court.

(*Lewd Hat* 487)

This comment accurately situates Gosson among other literary hacks eager to find patrons by writing things palatable to those in power, but it also situates Gosson in the midst of a powerful antitheatrical movement. Antitheatricality is the aspect of the pamphlet that has attracted the most attention, both in Gosson's time and in ours, and it has often eclipsed the non-theatrical content of *The School*.

Some prejudices towards Renaissance pamphlets are still present in our modern attitudes towards pamphlets. Sandra Clark notes, "it was at this time that the terms [pamphlets and tracts] received the pejorative connotations they still possess" (17). So if Gosson's *School of Abuse* was perceived to condemn the stage, then it would seem that Gosson was using one disreputable popular genre of expression to attack another disreputable popular genre of expression. Clark warns that "The modern idea of a pamphlet as a paper-bound booklet of half a dozen pages is often quite inappropriate to these works" (24). Gosson's pamphlets, although much longer than half a dozen pages, were in fact not considered to be long enough by many of his contemporaries, but Gosson

explains, in his wonderfully antithetical way of stating things, that "sith they had rather fee their handes full of Paper, then their heades full of knowledge, I let them goe" (*Ephemerides* i).

Renaissance writers were not free to express themselves with impunity; there were certain limitations that governed, and often hampered a writer's creative outlets. Although gestures were made towards heeding public opinion by Elizabeth's regime, individual citizens of the realm were not allowed to advertise every opinion they might have. As Chambers puts it, Elizabeth's regime was "a government by no means tolerant of criticism" (271). One need only to examine the case of the unfortunate John Stubbes to understand the precarious relationship between the pamphleteer and the monarch. In 1579, only a few months before Gosson's *School* was published, Stubbes wrote a pamphlet entitled *The Discovery of a Gaping Gulf Wherinto England is Like to Be Swallowed by Another French Marriage if the Lord Forbid Not the Banns by Letting Her Majesty See the Sin and Punishment Therof*.

Coincident with the publication of Stubbes's pamphlet was a general outcry against the proposed marriage between Queen Elizabeth and Francis of Valois, Duke of Alençon.

This prompted Elizabeth's advisors to recommend that Elizabeth forsake the Alençon match to appease her people. Elizabeth reluctantly agreed, but not before certain consequences were administered. Not only did Elizabeth recall every existing copy of Stubbes's pamphlet that could be found, but she decided to publicly punish the perpetrators. Both Stubbes and William Page, the man believed to have published the *Gaping Gulf*, had their right hands chopped off in a public ceremony.

All of this led Loisleur de Villiers, a Stubbes sympathizer and leader of the Reformed Church in Antwerp, to conclude what might have been obvious in the first place. He writes:

I cannot refrain from saying that the way to pacify kings is not to oppose them, or announce by writings, signatures, or remarks that one does not approve their doings. It is necessary to be humble, or at least to hold one's tongue. You know why I say this and there is no need of longer discourse. (Berry xxxviii)

Examining the perils of commenting upon the Queen's policies raises some questions that are quite complicated to answer. Why would anyone attempt it? Why oppose a monarch

through public appeals? What could be gained by doing so? Peter Lake raises these questions in his article, "Puritans, Papists and Players: Was There a 'Public Sphere' in Elizabethan England?" In this article Lake explains that oftentimes the Queen's counselors, when finding their opinions meeting resistance at court, would take their argument "out of doors" by hiring pamphleteers to circulate their views. Gosson's pamphlet, and pamphlets like it, were frequently perceived as representing the opinions of everyday Londoners, even though many pamphleteers were actually hired by city officials who were hoping to bend the Queen's policy-making to suit their own inclination. Hence, those pamphleteers who were made to look like loose cannons were, in actuality, hired guns. In the case of Stubbes, Lake writes that the *Gaping Gulf* helped "to create precisely the sort of public stir against the match that his erstwhile backers at court could then innocently cite to the queen as yet another reason not to proceed" (7). Gosson's pamphlets could conceivably have been used for similar purposes. Pamphlets, then, were of great importance to Elizabethan politics, and the eventual formulation of the Queen's public policy. They were an invaluable resource for those hoping to influence the queen, and they could be rather profitable

for the pamphleteer himself, unless his pamphlet caused too much anger. Exactly how much money Gosson received for writing *The School* is not known, and to put forth an estimate would be to engage in sheer speculation. It is common knowledge, however, that those who lived by the pen were not independently wealthy, and whatever Gosson was paid for the pamphlet, it probably was not enough to live on. Pheobe Sheavyn cites a few examples meant to represent the hard conditions of the English Renaissance writer seeking patronage:

Prince Henry gave Michael Drayton a pension of £10, and Joshua Sylvester one of £20. It need hardly be pointed out that, even for the barest subsistence (except in Jonson's case) these annuities could only serve to supplement some other income. (18)

This could explain why, later in 1579, Gosson left London to be a tutor in the countryside, a profession that would have likely yielded him better pay and more security (Ringler 40).

Gosson and his peers would clearly see the importance of writing pamphlets that were palatable to those in power, especially the Queen. This limitation was oftentimes an



obstacle to antitheatrical polemicists, since so many English citizens with clout seemed to be connected in some way to the theater. Many companies of players were patronized by such influential elites as the Queen, the earl of Leicester, the earl of Oxford, and the Lord Admiral, etc. (Lake, *Lewd Hat* 437). However, if Lake and Ringler are correct, pamphleteers were often being commissioned to write against the theater by other powerful political figures who, although none were as great as the Queen, were quite formidable. E.K. Chambers describes a struggle in binary terms, pitting "the local magistracy, as represented by the Lord Mayor and the Corporation of the City," against Elizabeth's regime, "to try its strength, with the stage as a bone of contention" (237). If this summary makes the pamphleteers look like mere pawns in a game of socio-political chess, then the description has served its purpose.

Since pamphleteers were commissioned to write specific things by city officials, it is difficult to say how much of the opinions expressed in the pamphlets are the actual views of the author. One could easily speculate that the writers were entirely insincere, and in the case of Anthony Munday this seems to be so. But for most pamphleteers, including

Gosson, the issue is somewhat more complicated. Even if the pamphleteers were acting at the behest of city officials who were concerned about social issues (health, public safety, prostitution), this does not mean that the writer did not have religious convictions about the subject of his pamphlet.

Jonas Barish has made an exhaustive study of the history of antitheatrical sentiment, beginning with Plato and extending to modern times. He wrote a blanket statement that seems to give considerable credibility to the motives of antitheatrical writers in the English Renaissance: "Quite apart from abuse of time, waste of money, and the heeding of false political doctrine, the reformers genuinely do believe the stage to be a vessel of depravity haunted in the most literal sense . . ." (Barish 116). Yet even though Barish believes they are sincere, he does not seem to feel that most antitheatricalists are very rational. Barish never explicitly says it, but he consistently hints at the notion that most writers against the theater were motivated by personal problems. He feels that William Prynne wrote *Histriomastix* "to work off a staggering load of resentment and anxiety" (87), and elsewhere calls Prynne a "megalomaniac" (83). Barish associates the puritan fury

towards the stage with repressed curiosity and indulgence by claiming that to them, the theater represented a "deeply disturbing temptation, which could only be dealt with by being disowned and converted into a passionate moral outrage" (115). Also, when commenting upon Ben Jonson's feelings towards stage performances, Barish claims that "somewhere in Jonson there lurks a puritanical distrust of pleasure" (135). Barish complains that, "rarely do they [pamphlets against the theater] pursue an argument closely; more often they disintegrate into free-associative rambles" (88).

What Gosson has produced, however, is a restrained, dispassionate (relatively speaking) pamphlet that seems to contain a much more convincing argument than is contained in other antitheatrical pamphlets published in his time. Ringler writes that "The arguments in the *Schoole of Abuse* are remarkable for their essential temperance and reasonableness" (65). The factors that motivated Gosson to write against the stage were (1) a formal education that condemned, in the strongest terms, the stage, and (2) a generous stipend. It would seem, then, that the roots of his objection were external, rather than internal. This allowed him to view the stage as a skilled rhetorician

would, rather than as an evangelical crusader (like Prynne) might. This does not mean that Gosson's polemic was entirely free from personal prejudice and anxiety, he just does a better job of concealing it than most antitheatrical pamphleteers.

### The Readership of *The School*

The dedication at the beginning of *The School* is threefold. The first, and longest dedication is to Sir Philip Sidney; Gosson then addresses "Gentlemen and others." He makes a clear hierarchy in the readership, with Sidney on the top and "others" on the bottom. In retrospect, Gosson's decision to dedicate his pamphlet to Sidney appears quite foolish. After all, Sidney would go on to write the most popular and durable defense of imaginative writing that has ever been published in the English language. How could Gosson dedicate his work, which seems to regard imaginative writing as a very dangerous thing, to such a man? There is no clear answer to this question, but one can only assume that Gosson felt Sidney must have held negative views towards abuses in poetry and theater. Edmund Spenser related the inappropriateness of the dedication in a letter to Gabriel Harvey:

New books I hear of none, but only of one, that writing a certain book, called *the schoole of Abuse*, and dedicating it to Maister Sidney, was for his labour scorned, if at least it be in the goodness of that nature to scorn. Such folly it is, not to regard aforehand the inclination and quality of him to whom we dedicate our Books.

(Duncan-Jones 232)

Logically, this misunderstanding could be reduced to one of two causes: Gosson's naïveté or Sidney's duplicity. Elizabeth Porges-Watson cites the former reason, claiming that Gosson's dedication to Sidney was "almost pathetically inappropriate" (xlv). Interestingly, most scholars choose neither cause, opting instead to view Spenser's comments as ignorant. There exists something of a consensus in that Sidney and Gosson were in agreement on many issues involving poetry and drama. Maslen writes that "Sidney agrees with Gosson that the wrong sort of poetry is dominant in his own country, and that bad poets have been complicit with the recent decline of England" (26). Katherine Duncan-Jones observes that "Sidney and Gosson seem to have held similar views . . . shared phrases and quotations suggest that he had read Gosson's piece attentively" (233). Chambers feels

that Gosson's *School* did not impress Sidney, since "Sidney was not particularly concerned to uphold the contemporary stage, and occupied himself with answering a general complaint about poetry contained in the Schoole of Abuse, which had been merely incidental to Gosson's argument" (257). Whatever Sidney's personal response to *The School of Abuse* was, Gosson chose to view it as favorable. We know this because he dedicated his next published text, *The Ephemerides of Phialo*, to Sidney. After citing the hardship he has endured since the publication of *The School* (including death threats), Gosson warmly states, "I can not but acknowledge my safetie, in you Worships patronage, and offer you Phialo my chieftest Juel, as a manifest pledge of my thankfull heart" (3).

Next in importance were the "gentlemen readers." Most Renaissance writers hoped for a readership composed entirely of educated, wealthy people, but that was unlikely to occur in the late sixteenth century. The only way a selective readership could be guaranteed was to avoid publication entirely and circulate manuscripts amongst friends (as Sidney and others famously did). For pamphleteers, whose primary goals were to make money and be noticed, publication was a must. Only the most educated readers could have

understood *The School of Abuse* well, due to its frequent Latin passages and heavy dependence upon classical allusions. When Gosson complains about the ignorance of his readership at the beginning of *The Ephemerides*, it seems that he is more irritated with university wits who willingly pervert his argument because they are predisposed to support players, than he is with humble and uneducated readers who cannot grasp his position. He presents this complaint metaphorically:

I knowe that in Bookes, as in open fields, euery man pursueth that game that he lyketh best: a noble minde wil chase the Hart, but fooles pick Dasies if they may find them. Therfore if idle Drones assayle me, let them know that I shewe no sporte for them, my desire is, to seeke out meate for manly stomackes. (i)

Although Gosson had difficulty remembering them, we cannot forget to account for the "others" who made up a good portion of Gosson's readership. Pamphlets, although more expensive than the admission fees to most playhouses, were cheap enough to be bought by "middle class" Londoners. Clark notes that the "pamphleteers couldn't afford to alienate any potential reader, however humble or

undesirable, because pamphleteering was not a paying profession" (30). Exactly how humble and undesirable were some of the readers? Many of them were "people to whom the printed word had never been directed before" (Clark 39). Clark vividly depicts what might have been the readership for many Renaissance pamphlets: "We may imagine the farmer's son, the first member of his family to be literate, reading aloud to a circle round the fire, and the old wives instinctively recording in their minds the new stories to pass on to their friends the next day" (21).

Despite the fact that they were undesirable, these relatively uneducated readers had some redeeming qualities. Clark feels that, "Any man capable of reading a pamphlet or of listening to it being read, was in those days a man who knew something of rhetoric" (Clark 225). Barish reasons:

Readers, simply by virtue of literacy, possess a certain irreducible minimum of knowledge and discipline. In addition, they are removed from the passions of the playhouse. They can ponder, instead of reacting blindly, and so bring cool heads and sound judgments to this act of evaluation. (139)



Although I believe "cool heads and sound judgments" to be an overly optimistic expectation of any audience, no matter how educated, it does seem that readers are capable of lavishing more attention upon words themselves than upon secondary considerations such as delivery and spectacle, to which playgoers would be exposed.

Clark discredits many estimates of literacy in sixteenth-century England by warning that "historians do not agree on a general view of literacy in Elizabethan Society," but she ventures an estimate of her own, claiming that "at least half the adult male population of the city could read" (19). Needless to say this was not the hoped-for audience for many pamphleteers, but regardless of their desires, they would be writing for a diverse readership. Playwright Thomas Middleton lamented the heterogeneous makeup of his audience in the prologue to his 1612 play, *No Wit, No Help Like a Woman's*:

How is it possible to suffice

So many ears, so many eyes?...

How is't possible to please

Opinion tossed on such wild seas? (203)

Pamphleteers were presented with a similar problem, but most decided to write for educated readers, and let the "others"

struggle through it. Gosson's preface to *The Ephemerides* contains three and a half pages written entirely in Latin, which would have been illegible to uneducated readers. The "others" eventually became so inconsequential to Gosson, that in his final pamphlet, *Plays Confuted*, he completely omits their place in the dedication, mentioning only Sir Francis Walshingham, and the "Right worshipful Gentlemen and studentes, of both Vniversities, and the Innes of Court" (*Plays Confuted* 3).

Although a few antitheatrical pamphlets had been published before *The School*, they failed to produce much of a stir in the active print culture. Gosson's pamphlet, by contrast, was only published for a few months before rebuttals were being issued against his argument. Print culture, in Gosson's time, was such that "a conspicuously popular pamphlet, an assertive or controversial view, is readily followed up with a sequel or answer" (Clark 32). *The School* provoked several such sequels or answers. The rapid succession of arguments that responded to *The School* are dialectical in nature, each text hoping to add something to the argument. *The School* was actually the first argument in a series of three that condemned the theater. The next two were written by Anthony Munday, another reformed

playwright (who would eventually lapse back to composing plays) and were entitled *A Second and Third Blast of Retreat from Plays and Theatres* (1580), which claimed that Gosson's pamphlet was the first blast. After Gosson published *The School*, the players struck back with *Strange News out of Affricke*, an anonymously written pamphlet of which there are no remaining copies. Gosson soon published the *Ephemerides of Phialo* (1579), a fictional work, but the first few pages of it are a defense of *The School* and a criticism of *Strange News*. He describes players as "Doggs, which haue barked more at mee for writinge the Schoole of Abuse, then Cerberus did at Hercules for descending to hell," and describes *Strange News* as "guttess and garbage, neither heart nor liver, nor anye good intrayles [were contained within it]" (2). Through the help of Thomas Lodge, whose pamphlet, *A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse in Defence of Poetry, Musick, and Stage Plays* (1579-80), was as much a defense of the theater as it was an organized degradation of Gosson, the players were given a greater voice in the argument. Not to be outdone, Gosson wrote *Playes Confuted in five Actions* (1582), which purported to defy "the Cavills of Thomas Lodge, and the Play of Playes." *The Play of Plays* was performed on London stages, and it conveyed a message

that plays were edifying and useful. Again Gosson acknowledges in his dedicatory epistle that he was "beset with heapes of aduersaries," yet irresistibly drawn to the majesty of the cause. Somewhere in the midst of all this hysteria, Sidney began circulating his unpublished manuscript *An Apology for Poetry*, which made no mention of Gosson, but Kinney writes that "Sidney was clearly responding more formally to Gosson's argument" (44).

Before discussing the rhetorical nature of *The School*, as I shall in Chapter Two, I must point out that this cluster of texts that *The School* provoked was not entirely composed of pamphlets. *Strange News* has sometimes been called a pamphlet, but Ringler points out that,

if it had been a printed work, Gosson would have spoken of opening the book or turning the pages; instead, he said that he "unfolded the paper."

This phrase clearly shows that he was reading a manuscript. (Ringler 67)

The *Play of Plays* was also dramatic in form, and in addition to these, there were countless sermons preached by divines like John Stockwood and Thomas White that regularly addressed arguments that emerged from this dialectical struggle (Lake 435). All of these texts seem to be aware of

one another, and seem to have been composed for an audience that would be cognizant of the fact that the public stage was a matter of growing social concern. The fact that *The School* was situated in such a conversation must be considered before one can analyze its contents. Chapter two will accomplish both objectives.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE RHETORICAL STRUCTURE OF *THE SCHOOL*

#### Rhetoric Versus Dialectic

If *The School of Abuse* is merely part of an active dialectic with many speakers and many texts, then why is this thesis devoted to a rhetorical analysis of *The School*? The answer to this question lies in the nature of dialectic itself. Dialectics are conceivably composed of rhetorical expositions, as Jane V. Curran has deftly shown in her analysis of the *Phaedrus*, "The three speeches--one from Lysias and two by Socrates--must be viewed as constituting an organic whole" (68). George A. Kennedy also shows that the *Georgias*, although a dialogue, at times takes the form of rhetorical exposition. He claims that

Plato does seem to recognize that there are situations in which dialectic will not work and where recourse to rhetoric may be the only alternative. This happens in the *Gorgias* when Callicles becomes so angry that for a while he will not continue the conversation and Socrates is forced to expound some of his argument in a continuous speech. (46)

Treating complete texts as segments of a larger conversation was not an idea that was clearly conceptualized in the writings of Plato or Aristotle. It wasn't until much later that rhetorical theorists like Mikhail Bakhtin began to focus on this phenomenon. When emphasizing the importance of context for understanding each individual work (or what he would call an utterance), Bakhtin writes,

Thus each of the distinguishable significative elements of an utterance and the entire utterance as a whole entity are translated in our minds into another, active and responsive, context. *Any true understanding is dialogic in nature.*

Understanding is to utterance as one line of a dialogue is to the next. (1226)

The relationship between rhetoric and dialectic, however, is something that is not so clearly described in Aristotle's *On Rhetoric*, and has become problematic for many of its interpreters. The first sentence of *On Rhetoric* states that "Rhetoric is an *antistrophos* (counterpart) to dialectic" (Aristotle 28), but later in the text, Aristotle writes, "Rhetoric is a certain kind of offshoot of dialectic" (39). This appears to be a contradiction, and Brunschwig acknowledges that "it is difficult to build

anything solid on this rather enigmatic sentence" (35).

Kennedy complains that "Aristotle is at pains to explain how rhetoric is similar to dialectic and says virtually nothing about how it differs from dialectic, which a modern reader would like to know" (66). Because of the ambiguity surrounding these distinctions between rhetoric and dialectic in the works of both Plato and Aristotle, I feel free to assert that *The School of Abuse* is both a rhetorical exposition, as well as a part of a dialectic. The following chapters examine the former while acknowledging the latter continuously. It is through this act of examination that the rhetorical strength of Stephen Gosson's argument is revealed.

#### *The School of Abuse as Deliberative Rhetoric*

C.S. Lewis begins his *Preface to Paradise Lost* with a sentiment that I have found to be a very valuable guideline in any act of analysis:

The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is--what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used. (1)

Following Lewis's precept, this chapter will address



what *The School of Abuse* is before it attempts to show how it operates. After providing a clear insight into the nature of the tract, I will then show how it works to persuade its audience.

The first step in doing this is determining to which genre of rhetorical exposition *The School* belongs.

Aristotle divided rhetoric into three different genres:

(1) deliberation about the future action in the best interest of the state; (2) speeches of prosecution or defense in a court of law seeking to determine the just resolution of actions alleged to have been taken in the past; and (3) what he calls epideictic, or speeches that do not call for any immediate action by the audience but that characteristically praise or blame some person or thing. (Kennedy 7)

*The School of Abuse*, claims Kinney, is all three. It is epideictic because, "in the text Gosson censures certain practices and forms of art and sport in and around London and urges all citizens to adopt a similar attitude"; forensic because, "in a letter to Sir Richard Pipe, Lord Mayor, Gosson condemns past laxity and condemns specific legislation"; and deliberative "Gosson warns of future

danger and urges voluntary self-control as means of protection" (38).

Kinney notices elements of all three genres in *The School*, but he perhaps overstates things a bit when he claims that *The School* gives equal weight to all three types of speeches. I contend that *The School* functions primarily as a deliberative composition, focused on the future of the commonwealth. This is easy enough to prove. If *The School* is deliberative, then it will primarily require its readers to make a judgment about future events. If it is epideictic it will not require the readers to make any judgement, and if it is judicial it will require them to make a judgment about past occurrences. Although it builds its argument upon "past laxity" and present abuses, it is the future with which *The School* is chiefly concerned. In addition to the fact that *The School* had an observable effect upon the immediate future of London print culture, Gosson's language is decidedly forward-looking at its most definitive moments. He clearly regards his text as deliberative in the dedication when he states his purpose for writing,

I have seen that which you behold, and I shun that  
which you frequent. And that I might the easier  
pull your mindes from such studyes, drawe your

feete from such places; I haue sent you a Schoole  
of those abuses, which I haue gathered by  
obseruation. (75)

Gosson also states on his frontispiece that his  
pamphlet is a "Flagge of Defiance," which seems to signal an  
ensuing war with his detractors. He adopts this combative  
rhetoric later in the pamphlet when he predicts that  
"Players should cast me their Gauntlets, and challenge a  
combate for entring so far into their possessions, as though  
I made them Lords of this Misrule, or the very  
schoolmaisters of these abuses" (94).

Gosson's solution to the problem is also deliberative:

Let vs but shut uppe our eares to Poets, Pypers  
and Players, pull our feet back from resort to  
Theaters, and turne away our eyes from beholding  
of vanitie, the greatest storme of abuse will be  
ouerblowen, and a fayre path troden to amendment  
of life . . . Players would shut in their shoppes,  
and carry their trashe to some other Countrie.

(101)

The fact that it contains elements of the other two  
types of discourse should not distract the careful reader  
from the true function of the pamphlet. Aristotle shows

that rhetorical expositions can, to varying degrees, mix genres. In his description of epideictic rhetoric he explains that, "In epideictic the present is the most important; for all speakers praise or blame in regard to existing qualities, but they often also make use of other things, both reminding [the audience] of the past and projecting the future" (Aristotle 48). There is no reason to assume that deliberative and judicial arguments are not similarly able to breach their bounds and incorporate features of other genres. Thus, rather than the means determining the category of the speech act, the end to which the speech act is aiming is the primary defining quality.

#### An Appeal to the Worthy and Advantageous

Although a rhetorician could potentially deliberate about a countless number of things, every topic must be in some way devoted to increasing future happiness or lessening future misery. As Edward P. J. Corbett puts it, all deliberative appeals can be reduced to appeals to the worthy or the advantageous (121). *The School of Abuse* has been read a variety of ways since its initial publication: Thomas Lodge and Philip Sidney saw it as an attack on poetry; literary historians, such as Kinney, frequently see

it as an attack upon the theatre; and almost no one has commented upon the explicit criticisms that *The School* makes in the areas of dancing, dicing, and fencing--which were obviously important subjects to the author. Every response to the school has addressed the aspect that has most concerned the responder, but when one looks closely it is easy to see that Gosson is not bothered by any one of these vices in particular, or a few of them, but all of them. *The School* is not merely antitheatrical, but also anti-poetical, anti-musical, etc, when these activities cease to serve the state and the church. Gosson feels that England has undergone a disadvantageous transformation, from a nation of great military strength and martial prowess to one that values dances and plays and poetry over military excellence. It is the goal of *The School* to show how such leisurely civilian recreations are ultimately harmful to the commonwealth, and how a collective withdrawal from the London playhouses and such recreational resorts would actually benefit the English people. Although this theme is ubiquitous throughout the text, Gosson states it clearly and concisely several times. He metonymically exhorts his readers to:

Let *Pheonix* and *Achilles*, *Demosthenes* & *Phocion*,  
*Pericles* & *Cimon*, *Laelius* & *Scipio*, *Nigidius* and  
*Cicero*, the word and the sword be knit together.  
Set your talents a worke, lay not by our treasure  
for taking rust, teach earely & late, in time &  
out of time, sing with the swan, to the last  
houre. . . . Play the good captaines, exhort your  
souldiers with your tonges to fight, & bring the  
first ladder to the wall your selves. Sound like  
bells, and shine like Lanternes; Thunder in words,  
and glister in works; so shall you please God,  
profite your country, honor your prince, discharge  
your duetie, give up a good account of your  
stewardship . . . . (109)

It is evident that Gosson would like to infuse England with the political and spiritual dynamism that it lacks. Rather than soldiers and laborers, citizens of the realm are behaving like esoteric scholars and hedonistic revelers, two social stations that Gosson appears to hold in equal disdain, because neither of them seems capable of doing anything profitable. Thus, learning and leisure are abused when they are no longer utilitarian. Other opponents to the stage focused a bit more on the moral corruption that the

stage induces, such as Munday's highly emotional appeal in *The Second and Third Blast*:

Citizens wives, upon whom the Lord, for example to others, hath laid his hands, have even on their death beds, with tears, confessed that they received at those spectacles, such filthy infections as have turned their minds from chaste cogitations. (Quoted in Lake 431)

The theater, according to *The School*, is not so much a threat to purity, or even to traditional morality; its real danger is the possible decline of national defense due to an English public preoccupied with plays. Too much time spent in cultural or educational activities--like reading or watching plays--would weaken a nation and make it vulnerable to attack. In this regard, Gosson's concerns are equal to Plato's, who felt that drama's most destructive forces were frequently leveled at the state. Barish notes that "by taking the state rather than the individual as the standard, Plato subordinates ethics to politics. Not man but the state becomes the measure of all things" (16).

*The School* is replete with battlefield metaphors which illustrate the actual danger that Gosson feels is confronting his nation. Gosson warns his readers by stating

that "I cannot think any cittie to be safe, that strikes down her Percollices, rammes vp her gates, and suffereth the enimie to enter the posterne," meaning that it is useless to attempt to defend a city if it is being corrupted from the inside. He states the issue in more vivid terms:

If the enemy beseege vs, cut off our victuals, preuent forrain aide, girt in the city, & bring the Rame to the walles, it is not Ciceroes tongue that can peece their armour to wound the body, nor Archimedes prickes, & lines...that hath any force to driue them back. Whilst the one chats, his throte is cut; whilest the other syttes drawing Mathematicall fictions, the enimie standes with a sworde at his breast. (106)

It is clear that Gosson values the soldier over the scholar, even though he falls into the latter category. Later in life, Gosson would use his pulpit to endorse military action and to raise financial support for English troops. Ringler notes that "He not only preached for his church, he also stood ready to fight for his country" (45). When the Spanish attacked England with their supposedly "invincible armada," Gosson himself responded to the call to "provide arms and armour for the defense of England" and he



donated "a musket with flask, touchbox, murrion or helmet, girdle, and leather flask and one soldier from his parish" (Kinney 22).

Gosson would prefer that England return to its roots of martial greatness than catch this emasculating disease of civility, one which Maslen cleverly describes as a "textually transmitted disease," carried in the poems and play scripts imported from Italy and France (28). So, in an attempt to appeal to the worthy and the advantageous, Gosson appeals to the masculine--appealing to a binary value system that would find more sympathy in the Renaissance than it finds in the present (although the present still does not give masculine and feminine equal value and utility).

It is important to remember that Gosson is not nearly so concerned with the content of the plays as he is with the fact that so many citizens of the realm would chose to waste their time by watching them. Since Gosson does not mention by names the plays that offend him, it is difficult to speculate what he might or might not have seen. Even if he had mentioned the names of the plays that offended him, they may no longer be available to us, just as the plays that he condones are no longer extant. Gosson's perfunctory concession that there are valuable plays which are able to

encourage virtuous behaviour is rather weak and quite brief, but he would modify this in his later works, which completely condemn all plays.

This brings us to the evidence for Gosson's argument. Comparing contemporary England with what it used to be, Gosson deduces that "Our wreastling at arms, is turned to wallowyng in Ladies laps, our courage, to cowardice" (91). When one looks past the obvious artifice of the sentence (alliteration and antithesis are quite prominent), it seems obvious that Gosson is promoting his hyperbolic version of history as a true account. Malsen describes Gosson's history as "cultural vandalism" that exploits history to make its points (65). This is especially interesting since one of Gosson's gripes with drama is that "playwrights pervert true histories" (Ringler 74). The following excerpt from *The School* shows the lengths to which he revised history. By quoting Dion, he hearkens back to the time when:

English men could suffer watching and labor,  
hunger and thirst, and beare of al stormes with  
hed and shoulders, thay vsed slender weapons, went  
naked, and were good soldiours, they fed vppon  
rootes and barkes of trees, they would stand vp to

the chin many dayes in marishes without  
victualles: and they had a kind of sustenance in  
time of neede, of which if they had taken but the  
quantitie of a beane, or the weight of a pease,  
they did neyther gape after meate, nor long for  
the cuppe. (91)

The mention of England's past greatness is not rhetorically insignificant, even for deliberative rhetoric. Gosson is attempting to draw upon England's noble past to use as a blueprint for England's future; he hopes that future generations will be like past generations. John Molyneux used the same strategy when addressing Parliament in 1567 in a speech "nominating an heir and a bill of succession." In his speech he claimed that he spoke for "all England, yea, and for the noble English nation, who in times past (with noe small honour) have daunted and made the proudest nations agast" (Quoted in Collinson 15).

Deliberative expositions ought to promise happiness or well-being for the audience, and it is interesting to see that Aristotle believes national ancestry to be a significant aspect of happiness. After listing good birth as one of the key ingredients to happiness, Aristotle writes that "Good birth, in the case of a nation or city, is to be

autochthonous or ancient and for its first inhabitants to have been leaders and their descendents distinguished in estimable qualities" (58). Pointing out England's glorious ancestry added significant persuasive force to Gosson's argument. This was such an effective tool in Gosson's rhetorical arsenal that he used it rather liberally. Not only did he cite England's ancestry on the British Isle, but he even claimed that England was an extension of the ancient nation of Israel. Gosson's own ingenuity alone did not inspire that claim: Patrick Collinson, in his article "Biblical Rhetoric," shows how Renaissance England began to assume the claim to be "God's people," much as the nation of Israel did in the Old Testament (17). The Duchess of Suffolk once wrote that "If the Israelites might joy in their Deborah, how much more we English in our Elizabeth" (Haigh 33). Gosson was using the religious rhetoric of the day, which promoted "think(ing) of the English people in the possessive terms characteristic of the Old Testament" (Collinson 17). So when Gosson writes of "GOD, that neither slumbreth nor sleepeth, for the loue of *Israel*, that stretcheth out his armes from morning to euening to couer his children," (107) his readers would easily understand that "Israel" and "his children" were both meant as

references to England. The fact that Gosson makes no attempt to explain the connection--that it is implied--is further proof of the fact that this was a rhetorical commonplace in late sixteenth-century England.

### The Three Modes of Persuasion in *The School*

It is not enough for Gosson to see the way to saving the commonwealth; he must also convince his countrymen, and in turn, the Queen, that his plan is the best course of action. Classical rhetorical thought is in general agreement that there are three main ways in which to make an appeal: Ethos, Logos, and Pathos. As in many things, it is Aristotle who speaks the clearest on this subject. Logos, being involved with reason, is the area in which Aristotle has the most to say, since he values logical appeals above all others, but Kennedy points out that,

Aristotle's inclusion of emotion as a mode of persuasion, despite his objections to the handbooks, is a recognition that among human beings, judgment is not an entirely rational act. There are morally valid emotions in every situation, and it is part of the orator's duty to

clarify these in the minds of the audience.

(Aristotle, Kennedy's footnote 39)

Emotions are a very powerful force in all decision-making procedures, and perhaps the most powerful emotion of all is fear. Gosson appropriates the fear that Londoners might have of being overrun by foreign powers, and tries to turn it into antitheatrical sentiment. Aristotle defines fear as "a sort of pain or agitation derived from the imagination of a future destructive or painful evil" (139), and invading foreign powers would easily fit into that category. To deepen the persuasive mode of pathos, Gosson uses the masculine/feminine binary. As mentioned earlier, Gosson feels that the national security of England directly correlates with the masculinity of the English citizens. In an attempt to convince his readers that watching plays makes them effeminate, and becoming effeminate endangers the commonwealth, Gosson is engaging in scare tactics that are so powerful that even in the twenty-first century they are still used by manipulative regimes. Gosson warns that:

When the *Aegyptians* were most busy in their husbandry, the *Scythians* ouerran them: when the *Assyrians* were looking to their thrift, the *Persians* were in armes & overcame them: when the

*Troians* thoughte them selues safest, the *Greekes* were neerest: when *Rome* was a sleepe, the *French* men gaue a sharpe assaulte to the *Capitoll*; when the *Iewes* were idle, their walles were rased, & the *Romans* entered. (105)

This type of *Ad Populum* argument, "one which appeals to irrational fears and prejudices to prevent audiences from squarely facing the issues . . . used to stir up a favorable emotional climate . . . to arouse hostile reactions" (Corbett 70), is generally regarded as a logical fallacy. Feelings of safety, national or otherwise, are certainly relevant to one's happiness, but to argue that dramatic productions will weaken national security, as Gosson incessantly does, can only be described as tortured logic. However illogical, this argument did resonate with the reading public, and this was mainly due to the emotions that it provoked.

Although most Londoners would not immediately equate the existence of plays with the decline of national defense, the feminine aspects of theater were quite apparent to any viewer. Cross-dressing was a notable aspect of early modern drama in England, and the Deuteronomic prohibitions against cross-dressing became "the most effective argument used by

Elizabethans against the theater" (Ringler 75). Lake points out that to the Elizabethan mind,

The offence committed by male actors impersonating women was not primarily sartorial but ethical.

For in assuming not merely the clothes but 'the gate, the gestures, the voice, the passions of a woman', their deceit was complete . . . Actors, on this view, were simply liars, and their activities could be of absolutely no moral use or guidance to anyone at all. They were, therefore, to be avoided at all costs. (*Lewd Hat* 443)

The fact that Gosson chooses national security as a central point around which to rally his emotional argument is significant since Aristotle states that the specific subjects

on which people deliberate and on which deliberative orators give advice in public are mostly five in number, and these are finances, war and peace, national defense, imports and exports, and the framing of laws. (53)

When Aristotle begins to explain the deliberative topic of national defense, it is easy to see the connections to Gosson's pamphlet. Aristotle warns that



it is necessary to know how many forms of constitution there are and what is conducive to each and by what each is naturally prone to be corrupted, both forces characteristic of that constitution and those that are opposed to it. By characteristic forces of corruption I mean that except for the best constitution, all the others are destroyed by loosening or tightening [their basic principles of governance]. (55)

Gosson believes that England's constitution has become too loose, and its people are taking liberties that are far too great. He hopes to tighten the "basic principles of governance" by restricting abuses, most specifically in the areas of poetry, music, and drama. Throughout *The School*, he shows how England's legislation is just and firm, yet the execution of the law is far too lax. He addresses specific liberties when he asks:

How often hath her majestie with the graue  
aduse of her honorable Councell, sette downe the  
limits of apparell to euery degree, and how soone  
againe hath the pride of our harts ouerflowen the  
chanel? How many times hath accesse to Theaters

been restrayned, and how boldly againe haue we  
reentred? (96)

With the mention of the Queen, the emotional appeal begins to subtly drift from fear to pity. Rather than urging the Queen to become more stringent in her execution of the law (which would be a very unwise approach to the problem), Gosson tries to conjure up feelings of shame for the playgoers who have abused the Queen's generosity:

But wee vnworthy serueants of so mild a Mistresse,  
vnnatural children of so good a mother, vnthankful  
subiects of so louing a prince, wound her royall  
hart with abusing her lenitie. (96)

If such emotions as fear and pity are not enough to move his readership, Gosson attempts persuasion in the remaining areas -- ethos and logos.

Perhaps the mode of persuasion that Gosson uses the most skillfully is ethos. This is advantageous for him, since Aristotle writes:

It makes much difference in regard to persuasion  
(especially in deliberations but also in trials)  
that the speaker seem to be a certain kind of  
person and that his hearers suppose him to be  
disposed toward them in a certain way . . . for

things do not seem the same to those who are  
friendly and those who are hostile. (120)

From the beginning of *The School*, Gosson is hard at work developing credibility with the readers. Maslen claims that in the *Defence*, Sidney adopts a "subtle approach" when he makes his argument, an approach that the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* describes as "used when the audience is assumed to be prejudiced against the client" (32). Gosson uses this approach as well, assuming that his readers are in favor of plays and immediately hostile to his pamphlet. When he makes this claim in *The School*, it gives him the persona of an underdog, one who invokes the audience's sympathy and understanding for undertaking such a difficult task. After making some initial remarks and references, Gosson addresses the argument that he is about to make. He comments not only upon his lack of ability as a rhetorician, but also upon the inevitable resistance his pamphlet will provoke:

I will bear a lowe sayle, and rowe neere the  
shore, least I chaunce to bee carried beyonde my  
reache, or runne a ground in those Coasts which I  
neuer knewe . . . And because I haue bene  
matriculated my selfe in the schoole where so many  
abuses flourish, I wil imitate ye dogs of AEgypt,

which comming to the bancks of Nylus too quenche  
their thirste, syp and away, drinke running, lest  
they bee snapt short for a pray too Crocodiles.

(81)

Gosson continues to make reference to his overwhelming  
opposition throughout the text:

I look still when Players shoulde cast me their  
Gauntlets, and challenge a combate for entring so  
far into their possessions, as though I made them  
Lords of this misrule, or the very schoolmasters  
of these abuses (94),

and ultimately ends his invective with a particularly  
pitiful self-effacing sentence:

I accuse other for treading awry, which since I  
was borne neuer went right . . . [who has] more  
holes in my life then on the open siue; more  
sinnes in my soule than heares on my hed: If I  
haue beene tedious in my Lecuture, or your selues  
be weary of you lesson, harken no longer for the  
Clock, shut vp the Schoole, and get you home.

(111)

Such a persona, coupled with Gosson's earlier claims of  
being a penitent prodigal, might carry a considerable appeal

with a Renaissance readership, whose pious tastes might highly value a humble writer.

But in case Gosson's persona is not charming enough, he also advances his arguments on the front of logos. The logical approach to argument is the most respected aspect of philosophical rhetoric, the type of rhetoric that Plato and Aristotle hope to encourage, yet it has been perhaps the most infrequently used rhetorical strategy employed by rhetoricians since the days of Plato and Aristotle. Even Gosson, despite his education, seems to be much more at home using arguments that appeal to emotion or character. This does not mean that his argument is illogical; in fact certain sections of *The School* demonstrate a very satisfactory grasp of logos.

Aristotle divided logical arguments into two groups, induction and deduction. Examples, parables and fables are all in the former group; common topics and signs are in the latter. Gosson shows a preference for inductive reasoning. His use of examples, particularly the kind that "consists in relating things that have happened before" (Aristotle 273) to situations in the present, is actually quite impressive. Examples, at first glance, might seem rather similar to the common topic of comparison, but a very distinct difference

exists between the two terms. An example "is a kind of induction" by way of "the relation . . . of part to part, like to like, when both come under the same genus, *but one of them is better known than the other*" (Aristotle 29 italics mine). Comparisons, however, rely upon an equal knowledge of both subjects being compared. In the case of Gosson's examples, many Elizabethan readers would have a greater familiarity with Elizabethan drama than the incidents from antiquity, but they would not be completely ignorant of the latter either. In fact, Gosson will often provide an incident from the past without giving its Elizabethan counterpart with the implied optimism that any sensible reader would already be aware of the state of affairs in Renaissance London. For example, Gosson merely states that,

Caligula made so much of Players and Dauncers,  
that he suffered them openly to kysse his lyppes,  
when the Senators might scarce haue a lick at his  
feet: He gaue Dauncers great stipends for selling  
their hopps: and placed Apelles the player by his  
own sweete side. (9)

No mention is made of the royal patronage that some companies of players enjoyed in the Renaissance. The fact

that Queen Elizabeth was an admirer of the theater was no secret, and was even celebrated in Ben Jonson's laudatory poem "To the Memory of My Beloved, The Author, Mr. William Shakespeare, and What He Hath Left Us," when he wrote how Shakespeare's plays delighted "Eliza and our James!"

Russell Fraser writes that "Elizabeth, who is not conspicuously openhanded, disperses annually to Shakespeare's fellows approximately 35 pounds" (79). It was much safer for Gosson to leave the reference to Elizabeth implied rather than explicit. The only way to safely criticize the Queen in writing was to do as Sidney did. Since Sidney's texts were in manuscript form and carefully circulated, he was "able to let off steam in numerous saucy asides" often directed at the physical qualities of the queen herself (Duncan-Jones 17). Published writers, of course, had no such option, as the unfortunate John Stubbes can bear witness to. Most of Gosson's comparisons are drawn from ancient Greece and classical Rome; they are usually examples of great men, but women do not completely escape his notice, "Sappho was skillful in Poetrie and sung wel, but she was whorish" (5).

Some examples that Gosson gives are not exactly factual, and seem to justify Maslen's label of "cultural

vandalism." These examples are actually closer to what Aristotle has called a fable, "the counterpart of the example, for while the example appeals to an incident that really happened, a fable is an appeal to an incident that is created by imagination" (Aristotle 273). Instead of comparing Renaissance England to a historical England, Gosson compares it to a fictionalized version of itself. For example, when he cites Dion's romanticized view of England (quoted above) and uses the masculine images that it presents as a contrast to contemporary England, he intends his audience to believe his example is factual. It is highly doubtful that such an England ever existed, and his analogy comes much closer to a fable. This might have been motivated by matters of convenience, since, as Aristotle reasons,

Fables are suitable in deliberative oratory and have this advantage, that while it is difficult to find similar historical incidents that have actually happened, it is rather easy with fables.

(181)

It should be clear then that Gosson is quite fond of inductive reasoning, and the logical aspect of his argument is conveyed primarily through inductive means. Gosson is a



deft enough rhetorician to rest his argument upon all three modes of appeal: ethos, pathos, and logos, and use each of the three rather proficiently. But even if a rhetorician has an excellent grasp of rhetorical structure, he or she must still know how to articulate the argument. Classical rhetoric traditionally divides a persuasive exposition into five sections: Invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery (Bizzel 3). The first two sections deal with the creation of the argument and have been discussed in various ways in this chapter. The last three sections all deal with the articulation of the argument. Since *The School of Abuse* is a written text, it would be irrelevant to discuss issues of memorization and delivery in conjunction with the text. Style, however remains a very important issue for *The School*, especially if it adds to the overall persuasiveness of the argument, as many rhetorical theorists believed it did. Augustine, for example, once observed that when an audience "hears [a speaker] speak with fluency, it judges that he likewise speaks with truth" (458). The next chapter will deal with Gosson's use of style, which is part of the reason that Gosson is still read today. As Ringler puts it, Gosson "deserves mention for his part in introducing and

popularizing the 'new English' that contemporaries called Euphuism" (1).

## CHAPTER THREE

### THE STYLE OF *THE SCHOOL*

#### Renaissance Prose Styles

Chapter Three will necessarily be the shortest chapter of this thesis. This is because the concept of style is a highly controversial subject in which even the most fundamental assertions are likely to be challenged. It is notoriously difficult to write about style, and as Bennison Gray hyperbolically writes, often impossible: "Any attempt to apply the concept of style to literature must inevitably end in frustration" (101). Despite these disclaimers, there are quite a few intelligent things that one is able to say about style, and Aristotle devoted an entire book of *On Rhetoric* to stylistic considerations. This chapter will discuss Stephen Gosson's style in *The School* and then show how his choice of style corresponds to Aristotle's stylistic prescriptions.

The style of Stephen Gosson is most frequently described as euphuistic, but a close reading of *The School* suggests that this designation does not convey the complexity of Gosson's style. A brief look at the styles

that were fashionable when *The School* was published will be profitable for the purpose of examining Gosson's style.

Euphuism is often viewed as a reaction to what preceded it, and a provocation to the style by which it was eventually supplanted. Before euphuism became popular, the dominant style of written discourse was the Ciceronian style, characterized by "connection, balance, conjunction, and long sentences constructed with carefully subordinated clauses" (Clark 231). Ringler states that "most of the Elizabethan academic prose was in the Ciceronian manner" (Source 684), and Coppelia Kahn reports that the way that most English schoolchildren learned Latin was by translating works of Terence and Cicero into English, then back into Latin again (7).

Then came euphuism, made popular by John Lyly's famous work *Euphues*, but which finds its immediate source in the lectures of John Rainolds, Gosson's famous teacher (Source 684). Ringler argues that "his cumulations of similes from unnatural natural history, his heaping of proverbs, and his grouping of historical examples . . . became typical of the euphuistic style of writing" (Source 685). Also important to euphuism were schemes such as:

isocolon (phrases or clauses of the same length),  
parison (syntactic correspondence between the  
words of each unit, noun corresponding to noun,  
verb to verb, and so on), and paromoion  
(similarity of sound). (Clark 236)

This style of writing became insanely popular from the time  
that Lyly published *Euphues* to the early 1590's when it  
became highly unfashionable and an object of ridicule and  
scorn. (Clark 238). Sidney's *Defence* denounces the  
euphuists, and writers like them, who:

cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is  
served to the table, like those Indians, not  
content to wear earrings at the fit and natural  
place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels  
through their nose and lips, because they will be  
sure to be fine. (114)

One of Robert Greene's characters in his prose romance  
*Menaphon* pokes fun at the heaping of similes taken from the  
natural world--a pronounced symptom of euphuistic writing:

Stones, herbs, and flowers, the foolish spoils of  
earth,  
Floods, metals, colors, dalliance of the eye,  
These show conceit is stained with too much

dearth,

Such abstract fond compares make cunning

die . . .

Which modern poets may perhaps allow,

Yet I condemn the terms, for they are stale. (160)

Or, as Michael Drayton put it, euphuists couldn't resist

"Talking of Stones, Stars, Plants, of fishes, Flyes, /

Playing with words, and idle Similies" (Quoted in Ringler

679).

Euphuism was later replaced by the plain style of writing used by Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, and Thomas Dekker. Kinney describes this kind as follows:

The language is blunter, the sound sharper, the rhythm -- rather than being closed and balanced as in euphuism -- is open, progressive, with sentences built accretively rather than by discrete segments. (43)

In short, the plain style was much closer to the colloquial, and did not smack so sourly of artifice to a readership weary of highly ornate diction and sentence structure.

Although this style is called plain, or sometimes low, it was constructed just as carefully (but not as rigidly) as euphuism. Clark describes how Nashe "carefully contrived to

present the appearance of inventive spontaneity. He used all kinds of devices to capture an informal tone" (255). The following is an example of the type of blunt, sharp sentence that Kinney describes:

But herein I cannot so fully bequeath them to folly as their idiot art-masters that intrude themselves to our ears as the alchemists of eloquence, who mounted on the stage of arrogance, think to outbrave better pens with the swelling bombast of a bragging blank verse. (Nashe 81, Preface to Greene's *Menaphon*)

#### The Style of *The School*

A reader of *The School* will not have to endure much Ciceronean prose before euphuism appears in the text. The first sentence of the text is written in a long-winded, balanced style full of subordinate clauses. Its tempo is slow and relaxed, and it is impossible to sense any proclivity towards euphuism on the part of the author:

Caligula lying in Fraunce with a greate armie of fighting menne, brought all his force, on a sudden to the Sea side, as though hee intended to cutte ouer, and inuade Englande: when he came to the

shore, his Souldiers were presently set in araye,  
him selfe shipped in a small barke, weyed Ancors,  
and lanced out; he had not played long in the  
Sea, wafting tto and fro, at his pleasure, but he  
returned again, stroke sayle, gaue allarme to his  
souldiers in token of battaile, & charged euerie  
man too gather cockles. (72)

The preceding sentence contains ninety-three words, and  
develops the first part of a simile that it will take two  
more sentences to complete. The simile, which compares  
Gosson to Caligula, is immediately followed by thirteen  
brief similes comparing Gosson's pamphlet to various items  
in one long euphuistic sentence:

The Schoole which I builde is narrowe, and at the  
first blushe appeareth but a doggehole; yet small  
Cloudes carie water; slender threedes sowe sure  
stiches; little heares haue their shadowes; blunt  
stones whette kniues; from hard rocks flow soft  
springes; the whole worlde is drawn in a mappe;  
Homers Iliades in a nutte shell; a Kings picture  
in a pennie; Little Chestes may holde greate  
Treasure; a fewe Cyphers contayne the substance of  
a rich Merchant; The shortest Pamphlette may



shrowde matter; The hardest heade may giue light;  
and the harshest penne maye sette downe somewhat  
woorth the reading. (72-3)

Since the first sentence listed uses ninety-three words to express one-third of a simile, and the second sentence uses one hundred words to express thirteen similes, then the second sentence could be considered almost forty times as efficient as the first in the creation of complete similes. The second sentence is not, however, efficient in its attempt to convey thoughts and ideas. In fact, it appears to use words wastefully--using thirteen similes when one or two good ones would have been sufficient. The rhetorical term for this is pleonasm, which is a form of copiousness that Arthur Quinn identifies as follows: "We know we have a pleonasm when we can eliminate words without changing meanings" (61-2). This massive generation of similes demonstrates one of the most frequent complaints about euphuism, that it works too hard to accomplish so little.

It is only when the apparent hyper-productivity of the euphuistic sentence is taken into account that one is able to draw a connection between sense and style in *The School*. Gosson's pamphlet exhorts his readers to become productive Christians and citizens, and condemns their lethargic love

of leisure. In an effort to infuse more energy into their patriotism and piety, Gosson uses a style which clearly conveys effort in artifice. It is not a smooth or easy style, but a laborious and strained way of writing that leaves the obvious impression of craftsmanship upon the reader. C.S. Lewis's description of euphuism indicates just how active a euphuistic writer must be: "What constitutes euphuism is neither the structural devices nor the 'unnatural history' but the unremitting use of both. The excess is the novelty; the euphuism of any composition is a matter of degree" (1).

There can be no question that Gosson was using an artificial style of writing that demanded nearly as much energy as the content of the pamphlet. The following sentence, for example, exhibits some very elegant stylistic features:

Small are the abuses, and sleight are the faults,  
that nowe in theaters escape the Poets pen: But  
tal Cedars, form little grayness shoote hight:  
great Okes, from slender rootes spread wide: Large  
streames, from narrowe springes runne farre. (94-  
95)

This sentence clearly reveals careful construction, and its style could only be considered dignified. Consider the meticulous parallelism that pervades the sentence. At the beginning of the sentence he uses one arrangement twice (complement, copula, determiner, plural noun) and then he alters the pattern and uses the new version three times in a row (adjective, noun, preposition, noun, verb, adverb), each time with a different subject (cedars, oaks, and streams). He uses the inflexible replication of speech patterns quite diligently, and in both cases he demonstrates a master's aptitude for parallelism. Syntax aside, Gosson also uses, along with alliteration, metonymy ("Poet's pen") which is a rather sophisticated example of wordplay.

Further examples of Gosson's loquaciousness are not difficult to find. The sentence: "To this end are instruments used in battaile, not to tickle the eare, but too teach euery souldier when to strike and when to stay, when to flye, and when to followe" (6) contains anaphora, antithesis, parallelism, and the sentence itself is metaphorically constructed around the specific terms of martial warfare. Paradox presents itself in Gosson's phrase "a black swan, and a white crowe" (8), and hyperbole shows up when Gosson claims that England has so few honest poets

that all of them could "creepe through a ring or daunce the wild Morice in a Needles eye" (6). When he uses the word "music" in a broad sense to describe the harmony of a civilized society and compares it with "music" in the sense specific to the playing of a musical instrument, he utilizes the trope of plocé. Gosson's treatise is so consciously embellished with poetical and figurative phrases that one could almost catalogue every known rhetorical feature within the text of his pamphlet.

Gosson's tendency to alternate between the Ciceronian and euphuistic styles involves a sporadic use of modifiers throughout the text. This is due mainly to the parallelism that accompanies euphuism. If Gosson uses modifiers in the first phrase of a euphuistic sentence, then the practice of parallelism mandates that he continue to use modifiers regularly throughout the sentence. The excess of modifiers becomes extreme in a sentence that occurs about midway through the pamphlet: "Alas, here is fat feeding and leane beasts: or as one said at the shearing of hogs, great cry and little wool, much adoe, and small help." It has eighteen content words, seven of which are modifiers ("Alas" being counted as a sentence modifier). This computes to 39%, which is almost excessively baroque, even for the

Renaissance. Gosson's pamphlet, as a whole, is not consistent in its use of modifiers. Some sentences--like the one just analyzed--contain many, while other, rather lengthy sentences are almost entirely deficient of descriptive language. The following sentence has only one modifier:

The title of my book doth promise much the volume  
you see is very little; and sithens I can not  
beare out my follie by authoritie, like an  
Emperour; I will crave pardon for my Phrenzie, by  
submission as your woorshipes too commaunde. (72)

This sentence is more Ciceronian than euphuistic, so it is not reliant upon parallelism, and is relatively free from modifiers.

Gosson's inconsistencies with modifiers does not alter the eloquence of his style. The heavy use of modifiers is not necessarily required to create resonant phrases. Take, for example, William Shakespeare's famous lines from *Antony and Cleopatra*,

His captain's heart,  
Which in the scuffles of great fights hath burst  
The buckles on his breast, reneges all temper,

And is become the bellows and the fan

To cool a gypsy's lust (1.1.5-9)

Which, for all of its lyricism, contains only three (albeit well placed) modifiers, that make up a mere 20% of the content words.

Stephen Gosson is still best-known as a euphuist, but Kinney has posited (correctly, I believe) that Gosson's style was not purely euphuistic, but tended to blend euphuism with the plain style of writing that euphuism anticipated. An example of Gosson mixing euphuism with colloquialism takes place in the "Dedication to the Reader," when Gosson warns that he will be purposely misconstrued no matter how clearly he expresses himself, since those who hate him are skilled at "Making black of white, Chalke of Cheese, the full Moone of a messe of Cruddes" (75). One can clearly detect the parallelism, the isocolon, and the alliteration customary to euphuism, but while euphuism usually dwells on lofty expressions, this phrase involves such banalities as chalk, cheese, and a mess of cruds. Where I disagree with Kinney is in the effect that this type of language produces. Kinney expresses annoyance with Gosson's lack of subtlety (2), but it seems to me that he is at his best when he is most frank. Not only are his

sharpness and tenacity the most engaging qualities of his pamphlets, but Gosson actually carries these qualities, quite effectively, into the sermons he gives later in life. His description of Presbyterians in his 1582 sermon "The Trumpet of War," for example, is excellent:

The new Presbyterie [is] couching downe at the gates of great personnes, with her bellie full of barcking libells to disgrace the persons of the best men, and the labours of the best learned in the Church of England. (Kinney 23)

#### Deviations from Aristotle

The use of the word euphuism in conjunction with Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* would be a rather glaring anachronism, since the word is derived from Lyly's *Euphues*, which was not published until 1579. Aristotle was familiar with highly ornate writing styles, however, and even though euphuism gained a name in the Sixteenth Century, many of the writers who preceded Aristotle used artificial styles of writing that are quite comparable to euphuism based on the degree of ornateness that they exhibited. Chief among these writers was Georgias, whose style is described by Kennedy as follows:

On Gorgias' lips oratory became a tintinnabulation of rhyming words and echoing rhythms.

Antithetical structure, which is native to Greek syntax, became an obsession. Clauses were constructed with persistent parallelism and attention to corresponding length, even down to equalizing the number of syllables in each.

(Kennedy 29)

Gorgias' style is noticeably different from Gossop's, as an excerpt from his Encomium of Helen indicates:

What is becoming to a city is manpower, to a body beauty, to a soul wisdom, to an action virtue, to a speech truth, and the opposites of these are unbecoming. Man and woman and speech and deed and city and object should be honored with praise if praiseworthy and incur blame if unworthy, for it is an equal error and mistake to blame the praisable and to praise the blameable. (44)

But even though his style is different from Gossop's (the major difference, of course, being the heaping of similes from the natural universe), it seems that Aristotle would be equally frustrated with both styles in a persuasive discourse. Aristotle feels that,



Authors should compose without being noticed and should seem to speak not artificially but naturally. (The latter is persuasive, the former the opposite; for [if artifice is obvious] people become resentful, as if someone plotting against them. (222)

He reemphasizes this point later when he claims that "when a speaker throws more words at someone who already understands, he destroys the clarity by the darkness" (228).

Seeing, then, how far Gosson has diverged from Aristotle's specific stylistic recommendations, one may conclude that this was a decision made more directly from instinct than from education. In this case, instinct appears to have been the more accurate guide. Gosson must have felt that he knew his readership better than Aristotle did, and it is fortunate for him that he did write euphuistically, since his style appears to be the one virtue of *The School* that even its critics acknowledged. It appears that he successfully achieved that invaluable quality of persuasion that Augustine described as fluency. In his rancorous tract *Alarum Against Userers*, Thomas Lodge generously conceded to Gosson that,

Now in publike I confesse thou hast a good pen,  
and if thou keepe thy Methode in discourse, and  
leave thy slandering without cause, there is no  
doubt but thou shalt bee commended for thy coppie,  
and praised for thy stile. (qtd. in Ringler 83)

Rhetoric is, after all, a highly subjective field. It is largely a matter of taste, and taste differs from person to person, from generation to generation. The important thing is finding the right word for the right moment, and Gosson seems to have done precisely that when he wrote *The School*. Although Aristotle favored a plain style, there were other brilliant theorists, like Cicero, who encouraged elegant language in a persuasive discourse. Gosson chooses to begin *The School* with a lengthy quote from Cicero which seems to indicate that the author of any written text is obliged to use a dazzling style. Kinney translates the Latin quote as follows:

To commit one's reflections to writing, without  
being able to arrange or express them clearly or  
attract the reader by some sort of charm,  
indicates a man who makes an unpardonable misuse  
of leisure and his pen. (53)

The preceding quote not only reinforces Gosson's theme of "leisure squandered," but also indicates Gosson's elevated emphasis of style.

Corbett makes a reasonable claim about style when he writes that, "there cannot be such a thing as an absolute 'best style.' A writer must be in command of a variety of styles, in order to draw on the style that is most appropriate to the situation" (338). Perhaps the most important aspect of persuasive speech is an understanding of *kairos*, or "the immediate social situation" (Bizzel 81). Because Gosson had a sound understanding of his audience, he made the rhetorical decisions he felt would work the best for his situation. This meant following Aristotle's prescriptive structural guide that would provide a solid framework for his argument, while choosing a fashionable style that would draw attention to his work. Gosson appears to have engaged his readers thoroughly, and all extra-textual factors considered, the success of Gosson's *The School of Abuse* seems to lie in a few very appropriate rhetorical decisions.

## Conclusion

When compared with the available literature written about Stephen Gosson, this contribution to that literature is unique in that it is exclusively devoted to *The School of Abuse*. I have discussed, to a limited extent, the cluster of politically charged publications that relate in various ways to *The School of Abuse*, but the real focus of this thesis has been the rhetorical power of *The School* itself. Confining my study to the School has been advantageous in that it has allowed me to scrutinize *The School* in relation to the three elements of rhetoric: writer, text, and readership. The more I examined these issues, the more it seemed that the creation of *The School* was greatly informed by Aristotle's *On Rhetoric* and other classical sources. Gosson's masterful grasp of classical rhetoric has contributed to his success in matters of content, organization, and style, and it is this mastery that seems mostly responsible for the enjoyment of the readers. It is easy to forget that besides being socially important, *The School* has produced a good deal of literary satisfaction for many of its readers. In fact, if *The School* had not been an engaging text to read, it is unlikely that it would have had any social value at all. Gosson possessed an understanding

of classical rhetoric that was not only precise, but it was also wise. He demonstrates his precision when he follows the exact prescriptions of classical rhetorical theorists, and his wisdom when he deviates from their recommendations because he intuitively feels that his readership would benefit from the deviation.

## REFERENCES

- Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. Trans. George A. Kennedy. New York: Oxford UP, 1991.
- Barish, Jonas. *The Antitheatrical Prejudice*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1981.
- Berry, Lloyd E. *John Stubbs's Gaping Gulf*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1968.
- Bizzel, Patricia and Bruce Herberg eds. *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*. 2nd ed. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001.
- Butler, Martin. *Theatre and Crisis, 1632-1642*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1984.
- Clark, Sandra. *The Elizabethan Pamphleteers*. New Jersey: Associated UP, 1983.
- Collinson, Patrick. "Biblical Rhetoric: The English Nation and National Sentiment in the Prophetic Mode." *Religion and Culture in Renaissance England*. Eds. Claire McEachern and Debora Shuger. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1997. 15-45.
- Corbett, Edward P.J. and Robert J. Connors. *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*. New York: Oxford UP, 1999.
- Erasmus, Desiderius. "Copia: Foundations of the Abundant

- Style." *The Rhetorical Tradition*. Eds. Patricia Bizzel and Bruce Herzberg. Boston: St. Martin's, 2001.
- Foster, Don. *Author Unknown*. New York: Holt, 2000.
- Gosson, Stephen. "The Schoole of Abuse." Arthur F. Kinney 69-111.
- Gray, Bennison. *Style: The Problem and Its Solution*. The Hague: Mouton, 1969.
- Greene, Robert. *Menaphon: Camilla's Alarm to slumbering Euphues in his melancholy cell at Silexedra*. Ed. Brenda Carter. Ottawa: Dovehouse, 1996.
- Haigh, Christopher. *Elizabeth I*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Longman: London, 1998.
- Hough, Graham. *Style and Stylistics*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966.
- Kahn, Coppelia. *Roman Shakespeare: Warriors, Wounds, and Women*. London: Routledge, 1997.
- Kennedy, George A. *Classical Rhetoric and its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1980
- Kinney, Arthur F. *Markets of Bawdrie*. Salzburg: Salzburg Studies in English Literature, no 4. 1974.
- Lake, Peter. "Puritans, Papists and Players: Was there a 'Public Sphere' in Elizabethan England?" Unpublished

- typescript. Forthcoming in *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England*. Manchester: Manchester UP.
- and Michael Questier. *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat*. New Haven: Yale UP, 2001.
- Lewis, C.S. *English Literature in the Sixteenth Century, Excluding Drama*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954.
- . *A Preface to Paradise Lost*. Oxford: UP, 1942.
- Lodge, Thomas. "A Reply to Stephen Gosson's Schoole of Abuse in Defence of Poetry, Musick, and Stage Plays." *Renaissance Editions*. Ed. Richard Bear. July 2000. 16 July 2003.
- <<http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/lodge.html>>
- Machiavelli, Niccolo. "The Prince." *Three Renaissance Classics*. Ed. Burton A. Milliagan. New York: Scribner's, 1953.
- Maslen, R.W. Introduction. *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*. By Sir Philip Sidney. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002.
- Middleton, Thomas. *A Mad World, My Masters and Other Plays*. Ed. Michael Taylor. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995.
- Pooley, Roger. *English Prose of the Seventeenth Century*,



- 1590-1700. London: Longman, 1992.
- Porges-Watson, Elizabeth . Introduction. *Defence of Poesie, Astrophil and Stella, and Other Writings*. By Sir Phillip Sidney. Cambridge: Everyman, 1999.
- Quinn, Arthur. *Figures of Speech*. Davis: Hermagoras, 1993.
- Ringler, William. "The Immediate Source of Euphuism." *PMLA* 53.3 (1938): 678-86.
- . *Stephen Gosson: A Biographical and Critical Study*. Princeton: UP, 1942.
- Sheavyn, Phoebe. *The Literary Profession in the Elizabethan Age*. New York: Haskell House, 1964.
- Sidney, Sir Philip. *An Apology for Poetry (or The Defence of Poesy)*. Ed. Geoffrey Shepherd. Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002.
- Wiseman, Susan. *Drama and Politics in the English Civil War*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.